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# CREATING A *European* SECURITY AND DEFENSE IDENTITY

By CHARLES L. BARRY

**T**he notion of a unified European military is nothing new. It was raised after World War II as a means of ridding the Continent of its legacy of internal warfare and nearly succeeded before falling victim to fears of lost sovereignty. Forgotten but not completely abandoned, it was revived in 1987 under more favorable conditions after the awakening of a long-dormant defense institution, the Western European Union (WEU).

The born again WEU called for greater cooperation on security and defense (including arms production) noting that, "Europe's integration will never be complete so long as it does not include security and defense." The effort moved slowly at first but then gained momentum with the end of the Cold War. With the final outcome still uncertain, however, the idea of portraying Europe as a more or less free-standing pillar of NATO assumed the awkward rubric of European security

and defense identity (ESDI). Now ten years old ESDI seems here to stay.

Initial American reactions to ESDI were polite but proscriptive, emphasizing that it should be transparent and complement NATO. Moreover, the United States saw it as an internal European matter unlikely to have major implications for the Alliance. But France, always an advocate of greater independence from the United States, saw ESDI as a means of reducing American influence after the demise of the Soviet Union. Future U.S. force levels in Europe were unpredictable, and France pointed to the possibility of a complete American pullout, raising the fear among Europeans that they might be left to fend for themselves and thus need their own defense capability.

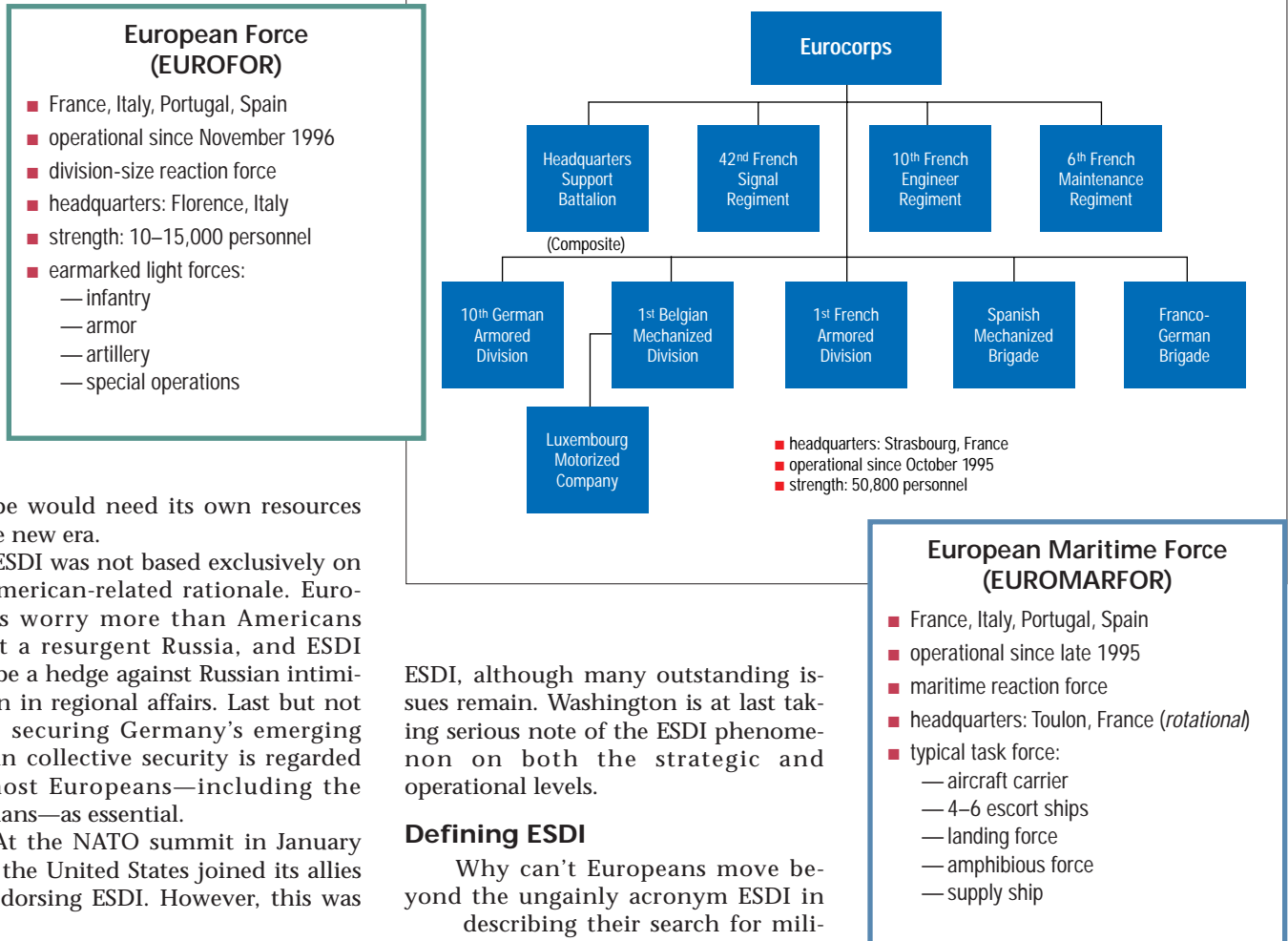
Simultaneously, American political interest in Europe appeared to wane. Key U.S. posts at NATO went unfilled for long periods in 1993 and Washington was focused on the Asia-Pacific region and domestic affairs. Political interest in Europe seemed relegated to central and eastern Europe and Russia. America's limited participation in Bosnia and differences with its allies were taken as more evidence that

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Figure 1. European Military Formations



Europe would need its own resources in the new era.

ESDI was not based exclusively on an American-related rationale. Europeans worry more than Americans about a resurgent Russia, and ESDI may be a hedge against Russian intimidation in regional affairs. Last but not least, securing Germany's emerging role in collective security is regarded by most Europeans—including the Germans—as essential.

At the NATO summit in January 1994 the United States joined its allies in endorsing ESDI. However, this was

**to many people ESDI is only a vague theory on the periphery of serious military activities**

less a shift in the American or European position than it appeared. There followed a two-and-a-half year struggle to agree on the means to fulfill the summit pledge that NATO assets would be provided to WEU as necessary to field an ESDI force under the combined joint task force (CJTF) concept. A definitive endorsement of ESDI was finally reached at the June 1996 NATO ministerial meeting in Berlin, and the way was cleared to provide a European defense capability without the cost of duplicative military structures. Since then there has been a display of transatlantic unanimity on

ESDI, although many outstanding issues remain. Washington is at last taking serious note of the ESDI phenomenon on both the strategic and operational levels.

### Defining ESDI

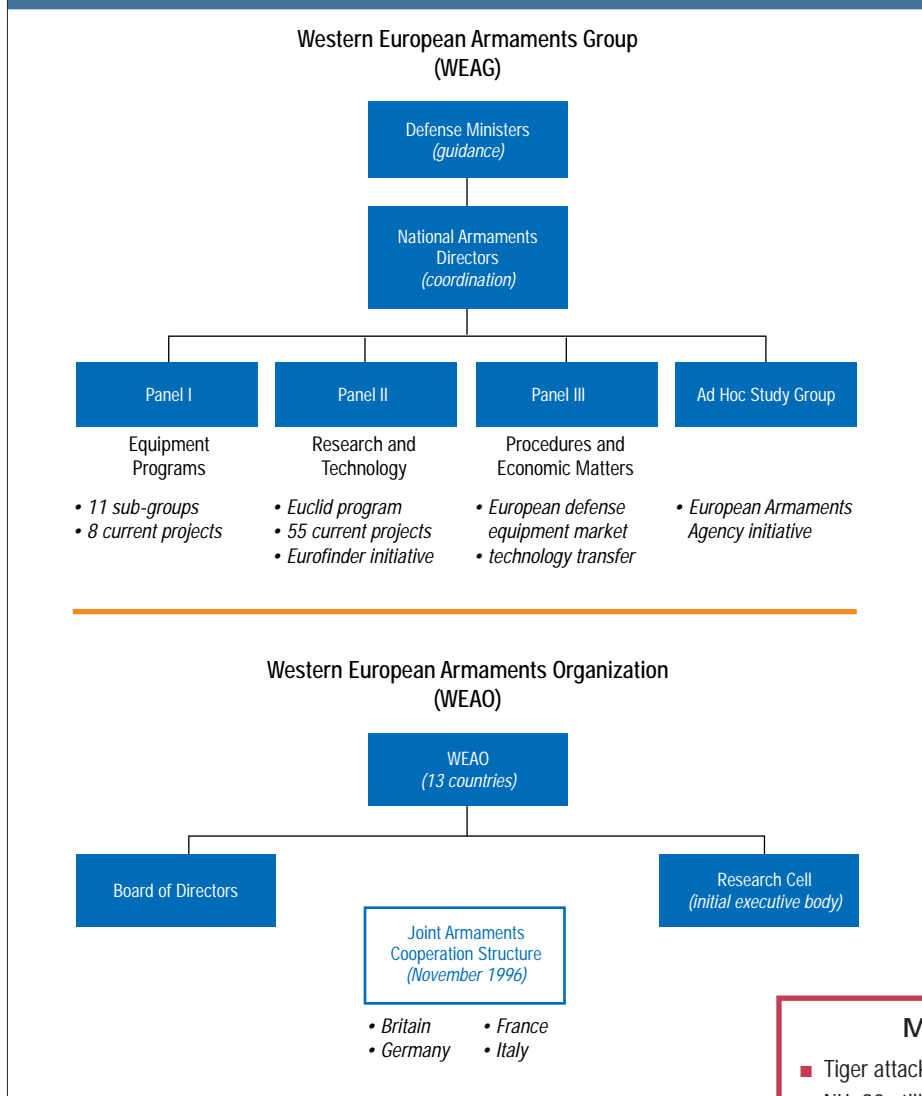
Why can't Europeans move beyond the ungainly acronym ESDI in describing their search for military cohesion? The answer is that the intended endstate remains uncertain. Many nations in Europe still adhere to the concept of independent action even as national militaries become less and less tenable within the transatlantic framework.

To many people ESDI is only a vague theory on the periphery of serious military activities. A consistent caution heard on both sides of the Atlantic is not to make too much of it too soon. However, three realities must be understood in assessing its potential or even its survival. First, there are many obstacles to creating one force from many. The most salient remains sovereignty. Yet Europeans reject renationalization of defense and have steadily surrendered sovereignty since integration began in 1951. Second, the

decade-old ESDI initiative, while seemingly at a standstill on occasion, shows no sign of vanishing. In fact, the opposite is true, with our most stalwart ally, Britain, backing ESDI. Third, the original motives for creating ESDI endure: to counterbalance the United States and Russia in European affairs, provide an option when American and European interests diverge, and pursue the logic of bringing integration to the fields of security and defense.

Another rationale has emerged of late. Economic strains have left some countries in Europe with no alternative to consolidating declining military establishments and defense industries. Some national forces are all but unsustainable. Defense industries can no

Figure 2. European Arms Cooperation Activities



has been limited to lightweight activities such as aligning EU political influence around the world through financial contributions. Its most significant actions have been to establish a framework for EU relations with Burundi, Rwanda, and Ukraine. Under CFSP, EU has arranged humanitarian aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina, administered the town of Mostar (with WEU), and sent observers to elections in Russia, South Africa, and the Middle East. But this is thin gruel in terms of security affairs, even for a mechanism not yet four years old. The diverse cultures, history of war among EU members, and differing concepts of integration dictate that CFSP initiatives will remain small, especially in peacetime when national priorities come to the fore.

An effort aimed at strengthening CFSP decisionmaking was sought at the 1996–97 EU intergovernmental conference. But the agreement to be reached at the Amsterdam summit in June 1997 had very little import for CFSP. One shortcoming addressed in Amsterdam was the planning staff. A small group will be formed by dual-hatted council secretariat personnel and civilian and military national representatives. Advances in other areas may also strengthen CFSP. Procedures were accepted for qualified majority

#### Major European Joint Ventures

- Tiger attack helicopter
- NH-90 utility helicopter
- future large aircraft
- Eurofighter 2000
- Horizon frigate
- family of wheeled armored vehicle
- Tornado fighter
- Euromissile

longer operate independently, nor can new systems be fielded by a single nation. For the United States, which needs a stronger partner in Europe, ESDI is an initiative to encourage.

#### Hard Evidence

The value of ESDI will ultimately be measured by the forces that Europe actually deploys. As military analysts know, however, forces are embedded in institutions and capabilities. In fact, ESDI is manifest in several venues of security and defense, political and military. The evidence is found in at least five broad areas: European Union (EU) political actions

under the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), a wider WEU role visibility inside NATO, armaments cooperation, multinational formations, and military operations. The place to begin a description of ESDI is with common EU security policies where political agreements are embodied.

*Common Foreign and Security Policy.* This pillar is the most visible evidence of collective political will to create a recognizable European identity in broader security terms. Thus far CFSP

voting on minor decisions, and “constructive abstention,” whereby unwilling members would agree to not block actions by willing members, might be agreed upon.

*Western European Union.* Responsibility for developing ESDI operationally inside NATO and as a separable but not separate capability rests with WEU. Since moving to Brussels in 1993, a new WEU has steadily evolved, though its main effort has been internal: institutional structures, staff procedures, data collection, and military

Italian guided missile destroyer *Impavido*.



U.S. Navy

planning. Externally, WEU has built ties to EU and NATO and has created several types of WEU-related standing for the non-union members of both, along with central and east European countries (including Russia and Ukraine) and some southern Mediterranean nations. The union meets routinely with non-WEU states and includes them when developing positions on European security, thus adding to the weight of those views. More than twenty countries have pledged forces to WEU to conduct European-led crisis response operations.

Since 1988 the union has conducted several military operations. But overall decisions to engage militarily have been marked by political caution rather than a desire to further ESDI. While the reasons for caution are complex, two predominate. One is a reluctance to undercut American engagement by signalling a substantial capability for Europe to act alone. The United States might then use ESDI as a pretext for further reducing its presence in Europe. The other is an aversion to risking action where success is not guaranteed. To field ESDI both

cautions must be overcome. Exercises, defense investments, and working closely with the United States are required. WEU has completed its first series of crisis management exercises with satisfactory results. Given fiscal constraints and the need to maintain momentum toward the first real "Petersberg" operation, WEU will have to rely on simulations. As NATO and the United States learned, simulations not only enhance staff skills but strengthen political-military decision-making and organizational confidence.

*Armaments Cooperation.* Until the functions of the Independent European Program Group (IEPG) were transferred to WEU in 1992, cooperation in armaments existed only as a forum for information sharing for 16 years. With the ultimate aim of creating a strong European Armaments Agency, the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG) seeks to coordinate not only research and technology but cooperative equipment programs and common economic policies (see figure 1). WEAG coordinates with arms industries through the European Defense Industries Group. Recent reforms have increased the number of programs implemented and cut delays. In

November 1996, the Western European Armaments Organization became a subsidiary activity. These structures, as well as WEU itself—which has interests in space intelligence initiatives because of investment in the Torrejón Satellite Center—represent the state of ESDI in defense industrial base cooperation.

More than any other area of defense, arms production cuts close to the bone of sovereignty. The major arms-producing nations—Britain, France, Germany, and Italy—defend less efficient capacities on political, security, and economic grounds. Jealously over taxes and jobs and the lack of common business law have precluded mergers to rationalize European defense industries. While cooperation exists it comes via costly and time-consuming joint ventures. Industrial consolidation in America is well ahead of that in Europe because it is not saddled by pluralistic political structures.

*Multinational Military Forces.* The key indicators of ESDI are multinational, particularly Eurocorps, European Force (EUROFOR), and European Maritime Force (EUROMARFOR), and there are also other units, including NATO corps. Except for NATO Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps—which has potential as an ESDI force under NATO—no other formation has representation from more than five countries and several are bilateral.<sup>1</sup> Some have specific headquarters while others are simply planning and coordinating arrangements which allow for combined training and operations.

Eurocorps, EUROFOR, and EUROMARFOR are salient in assessing ESDI because they were established outside of NATO; and although available to the Alliance, their priority is to WEU. Of course, including *Euro* in a title is another indication of a desire for European identity even in loose bilateral arrangements like the Franco-British Euro Air Group. One common characteristic of Euro formations is that they are open to other nations that may want to join later. The five-nation Eurocorps, along with EUROMARFOR and EUROFOR and other efforts demonstrate a desire to move beyond agreement and field real capabilities.





Norwegian Leopard tank, Strong Resolve.

U.S. Navy (Mark Thelen)

***Military Operations.*** In the final analysis the forces which Europe actually deploys are the measure of its collective defense. WEU has launched a number of operational initiatives to “show the WEU flag.” In the 1988 Iran-Iraq war it sent minesweepers to the Persian Gulf. In the Persian Gulf War, it deployed a modest flotilla to assist the American-led task force. Subsequently, WEU showed the flag in the Kurdish rescue operation in northern Iraq. In the Balkans, WEU took part in the maritime arms embargo. It also assisted EU in the Danube River arms embargo operation and policed Mostar with EU. Although not under WEU, the Italian-led humanitarian operation in Albania can be seen as a collaborative effort by some European nations to act together.

### **A Common Identity**

The evidence demonstrates that there is a nascent European identity in security and defense. How strong ESDI will become in a federalized Europe or a Europe of nation-states—or a Europe somewhere in between—is impossible to foresee. What is crucial is that the independent defense establishments of European states are fast becoming unsustainable on any useful scale,

even for the major powers. In that respect alone, Europeans have few alternatives to some form of ESDI. In the long run, that bodes well for Europe

### **there are significant obstacles to overcome before a capable and dependable ESDI becomes a reality**

and the United States. Nonetheless, there are significant obstacles to overcome before a capable and dependable ESDI becomes a reality.

The first problem is the struggle between supranationalism and sovereignty. What kind of political-military decisionmaking is possible within EU or WEU? The acceptable solution over the next decade or so appears to be strict intergovernmental political relations in EU and almost totally ad hoc operational military commands under WEU for crisis response. Though such arrangements will work in some crises, they fall far short of the homogenous U.S. model or the fully integrated military structure of NATO.

The second concern is resources. Falling European force levels and defense budgets may soon bottom out,

but there are few signs of growth, especially in modernization and research. Contributing factors are slow recovery from recession and the struggle to achieve monetary union in 1999. Besides new capabilities, ESDI calls for investing in a deployable logistics system, training and exercises, and a host of related costs, not least for the pending shift of some European countries to a professional force. The more costly part of ESDI lies in strategic assets—capabilities such as command and control structures, strategic lift, space-based intelligence, communications, and automation-information processing systems. There are European proposals to procure at least some capabilities. But decisions thus far tend only to pool meager resources to achieve optimum output from current assets. Little is being invested to acquire added capabilities.

Yet it is a misperception that Europe is militarily impotent today. Its active forces are well equipped and highly trained, and both France and the United Kingdom maintain rapid deployment capabilities. As demonstrated in Albania, by the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mission in 1993–96, and with the rapid deployment force sent to Bosnia in 1995, Europe can cobble together its national forces for limited crisis response.

A third challenge is nuclear weapons. In ESDI developments thus far there has been scant mention of these arms. Can Europe's common defense identity be complete without arrangements that address a common nuclear umbrella? Indeed, article 5 of the 1948 Brussels Treaty, on which WEU is established, calls for all members to “afford the party . . . attacked all the military . . . assistance in their power.” France and Britain, both nuclear powers, have only the barest bilateral collaboration on nuclear arms. Would a European military not have access to the most powerful weapons of two member states? If so, would non-nuclear states effectively have a veto over nuclear employment? There is much to do in this area before ESDI becomes whole.

There are issues external to ESDI as well. The first is the potential for competition between NATO and WEU. With special emphasis on planning, resource allocation, and political military concepts, which security issues are seen as transatlantic and which as European? Another external issue, of particular concern in dealing with Congress, is the danger of overselling ESDI as a stand-alone European capability. The effect of such a perception is predictable: increased pressure or legislation on the withdrawal of forward deployed forces.

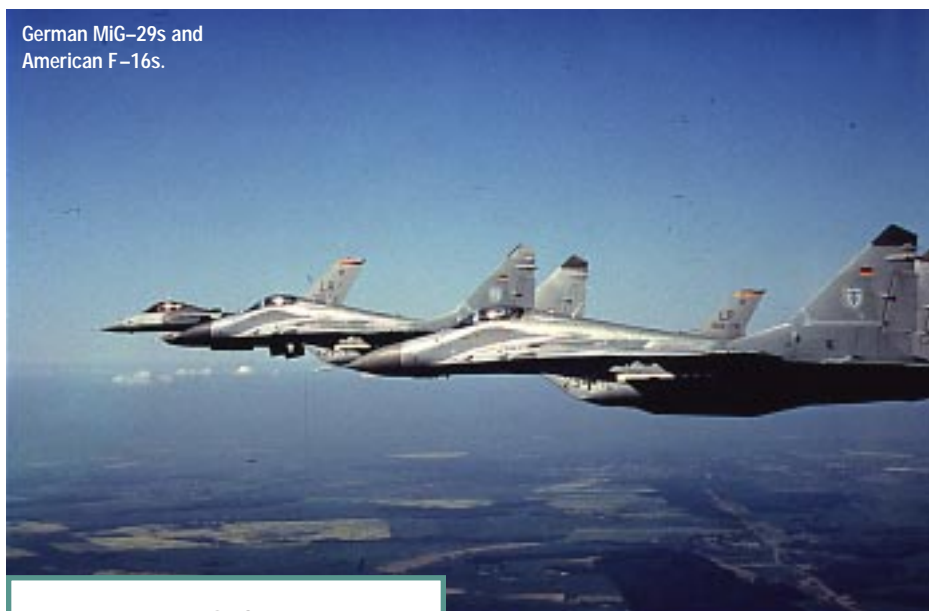
These concerns weigh heavily on the U.S. attitude toward ESDI. Washington is wary of any initiative that competes with NATO for the shrunken defense resources available in European capitals. Any investment in forces or capabilities outside the Alliance will likely translate into fewer resources for NATO. Solutions to the challenges facing ESDI are not readily apparent. They will require time and compromise to resolve.

### CJTF Potential

The primary aim of the NATO CJTF concept is to adapt the integrated military structure for new missions by giving it a crisis response capability.<sup>2</sup> A second aim is that it helps WEU realize a European-led capability under ESDI. Soon after the concept was approved two opposing camps emerged, one focused on the primary role of CJTF and the other intent on its secondary role. As the camps worked to thwart each other, CJTF languished in indecision for two and a half years and was occasionally pronounced dead. It had become mired in the larger debate over ESDI and the future of NATO—purely collective defense, or both collective defense and crisis management.

Fortunately, the great potential of CJTF for NATO and WEU was salvaged in June 1996. At a meeting in Berlin, France agreed to the creation of ESDI inside NATO and the United States agreed to both afford it adequate visibility within the Alliance and establish procedures for realizing a capability for WEU use in the near term. At present, CJTF is progressing toward implementation through planning, exercises,

German MiG-29s and American F-16s.



U.S. Air Force (Sean Worrell)

### NATO CJTF

- a military doctrinal concept adopted by NATO that will be wedded to the existing, proven—though much smaller—Integrated Military Structure

- primary purpose—to provide the Alliance with a more mobile, flexible military to conduct contingency operations beyond NATO borders

- secondary purpose—with agreement by the Alliance, to provide NATO resources in support of WEU operations for crisis response

- concept agreed upon in January 1994 and implementation approved in June 1996

- three NATO commands initially involved in CJTF testing—AFCENT, AFSOUTH, and STRIKFLTANT

- doctrinal and procedural development of CJTF concept and modalities for providing assets to WEU will be continuous

- current status—implementation proceeding under NATO and WEU collaboration; trials and exercises commencing for NATO in 1997 and WEU at a later date.

and trials under three NATO commands. But like collective defense during the Cold War, embedding the doctrinal concept of CJTF within the Alliance is a long-term effort. CJTF will serve as the basis for military activities and resources within NATO indefinitely. With the Berlin agreement, the same will now be true for WEU.

For ESDI, deploying CJTF represents its operational ability to implement WEU political decisions. A WEU-controlled operation, and hence the composition of the CJTF headquarters and forces deployed, is expected to be smaller than a NATO-led mission. But assuming that the crisis is large enough to concern all its members (not just Europeans), NATO would direct the operation. A related factor in allocating operations to WEU is that it is only in the initial stage of adapting to its new role and has no operational military C<sup>2</sup> structure similar to NATO.

### An Alliance Strategy

With a NATO-Russian charter in place and enlargement in train, the major unfinished business of NATO is to clarify the future U.S.-European balance within the Alliance. That suggests a bipolar relationship, one that is equal in terms of capabilities, responsibilities, burden sharing, and notably influence in European security affairs. This



British marine,  
CJTF Exercise '96.



U.S. Marine Corps (R.L. Kugler, Jr.)

new balance must be achieved together with an extension of the Western security systems eastward over the next 18 months. NATO will find it much more difficult to bring in new members and then recast the transatlantic relationship. At present the allies find it easier to focus on the East, where hopeful states are eager to join the club. Yet as cooperation partners reach the threshold, NATO, WEU, and EU may still be reorganizing and unready for new arrivals. Both tasks should proceed simultaneously.

The central elements of a new transatlantic security partnership will be a greater role for Europe in Alliance decisions, responsibilities, and burdens and a continuing senior partner role for the United States wherever its interests are at stake. The agent for a more unified and independent Europe will be EU. There is no way of predicting when European integration may plateau, but the surrender of national sovereignty in defense will take a long time if it happens at all.

While EU will be the central security-identity organization, WEU will be the principal actor for crisis response and collective defense in matters from former Yugoslavia to security relations with central and eastern Europe. WEU has gained momentum by operationalizing its headquarters in Brussels, absorbing armaments cooper-

### the United States wants Europe to begin making military responses to crises

ation, and actively engaging in WEU-NATO relations. It will be the expression of European security and decisions to act militarily.

These developments notwithstanding, political Europe—slowly coalescing toward political union—will not be distinguishable for some time. It will need a senior partner in the security field and not just as a catastrophic insurer. The United States wants Europe to begin by taking on crisis prevention and making initial military responses to crises. In turn, Europe needs assurance that the United States remains fully committed

to European security and defense through NATO. Until Europe can acquire capabilities in such areas as intelligence, information warfare, and strategic lift, its military reactions will be largely tethered to U.S. commitments of support in these functions.

In principle, when a crisis is small in scale, European-led diplomatic and military initiatives could end a predicament before it reaches either regional or global proportions. Europe assumes greater responsibility for regional stability, with an engaged, collaborative United States in a close supporting role. When article 5 of the NATO treaty is invoked—or a fast-building crisis takes on global implications—the United States would engage as the logical leading partner. When a crisis recedes to a level where regional management is possible, the United States should disengage.

### An ESDI Force in Bosnia?

Could ESDI send a European-led force to Bosnia in June 1998? With the termination of the 18-month Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission under a year away, the question is being asked. Both military and political factors are at play. The military issues can be addressed successfully if a concerted planning effort begins soon. Political issues are more problematic.

Militarily there is little question that an ESDI force could be deployed under WEU, NATO, or even a lead nation such as Italy in Albania. UNPROFOR was overwhelmingly European, and both the 60,000-strong Imple-

mentation Force (IFOR) and 33,000-strong SFOR are predominantly European in terms of forces on the ground. All EU countries, NATO members (except the United States), and ten central and east European countries have agreed in principle to provide assets for WEU-led operations. In addition, NATO (including the United States) has stated that if approved in the North Atlantic Council its resources will be used to support a WEU-led CJTF. WEU often refers to the “low end of the Petersberg tasks” as a desired CJTF capability, which means roughly a division-size land force component.



A post-SFOR force might be as large as SFOR overall; however, actual combat forces could be significantly smaller, depending on the situation and risk-assessment as June 1998 nears. For the anticipated peace enforcement mission of a post-SFOR force, there is little doubt that Europe could provide the required combat forces. The United States would have to augment a European-led force with C<sup>4</sup>I, strategic logistics, intelligence, and lift, and also lead an over-the-horizon rapid reinforcement force, which is within current NATO abilities.

Notwithstanding military capabilities, there are significant political obstacles to a European-led CJTF for Bosnia. The firm European "in-together/out-together" position reflects the deep scars of past disagreements over UNPROFOR. But the United States wants a crisis response strategy where regional capabilities are tapped first and U.S. forces are committed only to ensure that regional capabilities are not at risk of being overwhelmed. Once a crisis recedes to a point where regional capabilities are adequate, the United States wants the flexibility to disengage and go on to other tasks. For that to work in post-SFOR Bosnia, it will be necessary to shift from a U.S.-led to a U.S.-supported (European-led) force without rekindling the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

As senior partner, the United States must take the initiative in post-SFOR planning. It should present its allies with a workable transition plan, an assurance of robust U.S. support, and a credible commitment to allow Europe to take the lead. Military commanders recognize that developing leaders means giving them the tools to succeed as well as the freedom to fail. Congressional ultimatums and intra-NATO confrontations will not build ESDI. If the United States wants to leave Bosnia in June 1998 it will have to work with its allies toward the first bona fide ESDI operation and accept the risk that post-SFOR Bosnia is likely to evolve somewhat differently without U.S. leadership—a risk worth taking.

In the rarely mentioned but ever present contest between the United States and France for influence in European affairs, ESDI is a bellwether.

While there is currently no alternative to U.S. leadership, if ESDI succeeds—especially on the volatile subject of the southern flank—Europe will be able to manage crises or mount initial collective defense. Ideally, it will also assume an active role with America in meeting crises outside Europe. When that day arrives, the French perspective will begin to be realized. Today the challenge is harmonizing transatlantic views and furnishing capabilities that the United States and its allies can provide under ESDI to protect their interests. However, with more missions and lower force levels we must not miscalculate by depending on ESDI either too soon or too late. The first test may arise in post-SFOR Bosnia when ESDI becomes a reality and the transatlantic balance is decisively recast forever. **JFQ**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This corps can draw upon ten divisions to form a reaction force with contributions from every NATO member save for Iceland and Luxembourg.

<sup>2</sup> For assessments by the author, see "NATO's Combined Joint Task Forces in Theory and Practice," in *Survival*, vol. 38, no. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 81–97, and "NATO's CJTF Command and Control Concept," in *Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, National, and Multinational Considerations*, edited by Thomas-Durell Young (Carlisle Barracks, Penna.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 1997), pp. 29–52.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the options after U.S. disengagement, see the author's "After IFOR: Maintaining a Fragile Peace in the Balkans," *Strategic Forum*, no. 62 (Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, February 1996).

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